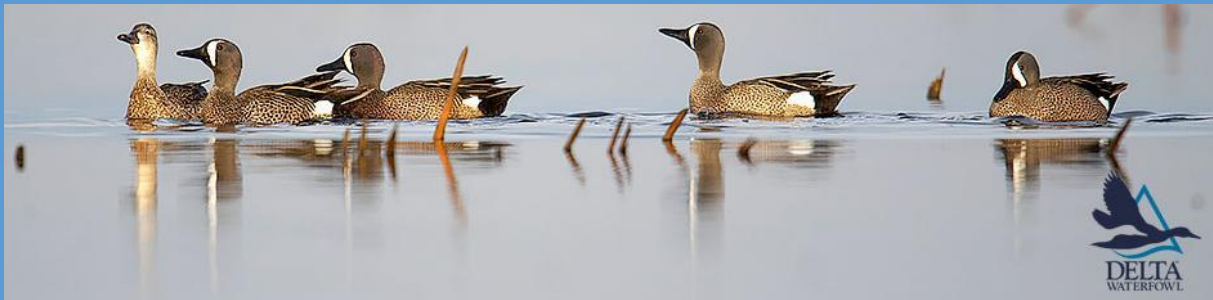


Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources



The Duck Hunter's Organization

Waterfowl Stamp Program FY18-19 Canadian Habitat Project Application



PROJECT SUMMARY

This proposal requests \$100,000 for the period of FY18-19, to contribute to the protection of critical waterfowl breeding habitat in the Mississippi Flyway, situated in Manitoba, Canada. These funds will be matched with other project contributions, resulting in a total project value \$1,795,600.

During the period of FY18-19, this project will protect an estimated 2,120 acres of wetland and associated upland habitat in perpetuity through the acquisition of conservation easements. Of this total, Wisconsin funds will support the acquisition of a minimum of 250 acres of critical waterfowl habitat, located in the North American Waterfowl Management Plan's Target Landscapes in Manitoba, which are characterized by waterfowl pair densities $>30^1$ (Map 1).

In addition to the 2,120 acres of perpetual habitat securement, 120 acres of wetland will be restored and protected under ≥ 10 year contracts. As well, approximately 2,000 Hen Houses (nest structures) will be maintained in each project year, thereby annually increasing mallard nesting success.

All project activities align with the objectives outlined in the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) and the regional *Prairie Habitat Joint Venture Implementation Plan 2013-2020: The Prairie Parklands*¹.

Delta Waterfowl



Since 1911 Delta Waterfowl has been a leading advocate for waterfowl hunting, research and conservation. Founded on the shores of the famed Delta Marsh in Manitoba, Delta has since expanded throughout North America and has held true to its hunting base.

Delta continues to support waterfowl hunting and production through a variety of research and the on-the-ground programming. Through a partnership with the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation, Delta has perpetually protected 101,810 acres of waterfowl habitat in Manitoba.



¹ Prairie Habitat Joint Venture (2014). *Prairie Habitat Joint Venture Implementation Plan 2013-2020: The Prairie Parklands*. Report of the Prairie Habitat Joint Venture. Environment Canada, Edmonton, AB, Canada.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Over 50% of North America's waterfowl are migratory, breeding in Canada in the summer months and travelling south to winter in the United States. The primary factor limiting waterfowl breeding success is habitat availability. Consequently, it is essential that conservation organizations, states, and federal governments in both Canada and the United States cooperate to ensure that critical habitat breeding is protected. Waterfowl nesting success is declining in much of the Canadian Prairies. However, conservation programming in Manitoba, including wetland restoration and enhancement, and protection of wetland and associated upland habitat, has contributed to stabilizing waterfowl populations in Manitoba, thereby benefitting populations along the Mississippi Flyway. The contributions of US State funds, including the Wisconsin DNR, have been instrumental in waterfowl habitat conservation initiatives in Canada. These funds are used both to directly support habitat protection and restoration, and to leverage additional contributions from other organizations, thereby increasing the total habitat.

WORKING WITH WISCONSIN – ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Wisconsin DNR has previously partnered with Delta Waterfowl to perpetually protect key waterfowl breeding habitat in Manitoba, thereby contributing to waterfowl that nest in the Mississippi Flyway. Most recently, Delta successfully applied for funding through the Wisconsin DNR's Waterfowl Stamp Program for FY16-17. Delta used this award of \$71,666 to acquire perpetual conservation easements on two properties, securing a total of 377 acres of prime waterfowl habitat located in Manitoba's Target Landscapes, including 176 acres of wetland and 201 acres of associated upland. The Skardal conservation easement was purchased in FY16 for \$29,305.92, securing 125.9 acres of wetland and 105.0 acres of associated upland habitat (Map 2, Figure 1). The McDonald conservation easement was purchased in FY17 for \$27,825.46, perpetually protecting 50.3 acres of wetland and 96.1 acres of upland (Map 2, Figure 2).

In addition to securing the Skardal and McDonald conservation easements, Delta used the \$71,666 Wisconsin award to leverage an additional \$603,668 in matching funds (as of March 1, 2017). These matching funds were applied to wetland protection and enhancement projects delivered by Delta's conservation partner, the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation (MHHC). These projects have resulted in the perpetual securement of a total of 13,535 acres of waterfowl habitat, with an additional 594 acres of wetlands restored and protected under ≥ 10 conservation contracts. To date in FY17, 1,192 acres of habitat, including 536 acres of wetland, have been secured in perpetuity, and a further 114 acres of wetlands have been restored and protected under ≥ 10 year contracts. Finally, approximately 2,300 acres of wetland habitat were secured and enhanced through the maintenance of Hen Houses, 405 of which were installed during FY16. Both installation and maintenance of Hen Houses were match-funded.

At the time of this report, the FY17 contract was still in-process. It is estimated that a further 1,477 acres in perpetual easements will be completed by the contract closing date, June 30th, 2017. Final results of the Wisconsin DNR Waterfowl Stamp Program FY16-17 Canadian Habitat Project Application will be available upon request.



Figure 1. Aerial view of the Skardal conservation easement, funded by the Wisconsin DNR in 2016.



Figure 2. Field photo of the McDonald conservation easement, funded by the Wisconsin DNR in 2017.

WORKING WITH WISCONSIN – FUTURE WORK (FY18-19)

Under this proposal, Delta Waterfowl will secure a minimum of 250 acres of critical waterfowl habitat in perpetuity using Wisconsin funds. These acres will include wetland and associated upland habitat, and will be situated in NAWMP's Manitoba Target Landscapes (Map 1). NAWMP's Target Landscapes are characterized by waterfowl breeding pair densities in excess of 30 pairs per square mile of seven primary duck species in North America¹. Included among these species are Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), Blue-winged Teal (*Anas discors*), Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*), Canvasback (*Aythya valisineria*), Redhead (*Aythya americana*), all of which are listed as priority species in the Upper Mississippi River and Great Lakes Region Joint Venture Implementation Plan (UMRGLR JV)². The UMRGLR JV also lists Mallard, Blue-winged Teal, and Canvasback as focal species: species selected to represent the habitat requirements of a wide range of bird species. Thus, securing waterfowl habitat within the Target Landscapes will directly benefit these priority species by protecting prime breeding habitat.

Loss of habitat is the largest threat to waterfowl breeding success. Wetland drainage and conversion of natural land cover to annual cultivation have resulted in an average wetland loss rate of about 3.5% per decade within the PHJV. Wetlands and associated upland habitat are required by waterfowl not only for nesting and brood rearing, but also for molting and staging. In addition, studies have shown that habitat connectivity is also important for waterfowl nesting success and brood survival³. Several species of waterfowl are dependent upon the availability of a large complexes of small wetlands scattered across a larger area. Under this proposal, Delta will address these issues by protecting an estimated 2,120 acres of wetland and associated upland habitat in perpetuity through the acquisition of conservation easements, including 120 acres of wetland restorations. As stated above, Wisconsin funds will be used to perpetually secure 250 acres of this total, paying a landowner incentive of approximately \$320/acre. The remaining securement, as well as all restoration costs, will be covered using leveraged funds.

In addition to perpetual securement and restoration activities, match funding will finance the enhancement of 4,000 acres of wetland habitat through the annual maintenance of 2,000 Hen Houses (nesting structures) (Figure 3). Delta has conducted extensive research into the efficacy of Hen Houses as a tool to increase waterfowl nesting success. Their research has demonstrated that Hen Houses increase



Figure 3. Female mallard nesting in a Hen House.

² Upper Mississippi River and Great Lakes Region Joint Venture (2007). Upper Mississippi River and Great Lakes Region Joint Venture Waterfowl Habitat Conservation Strategy. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Fort Snelling, MN, USA.

³ Naugle, D. E., Johnson, R. R., Estey, M. E. and K. F. Higgins (2000). A landscape approach to conserving wetland bird habitat in the Prairie Pothole Region of Eastern South Dakota. *Wetlands*, 20(4):588-604.

Mallard nesting success and brood survival rates from approximately 10% to in excess of 70%. In addition, Hen Houses have been shown to produce approximately 2.35 mallards per occupied structure per year, and have an average occupancy rate of approximately 60%¹. Based on these assumptions, approximately 5,500 mallards will be produced during the period of FY18-19 as a result of Hen House maintenance. In addition to the benefits to Mallard nesting success, MHHC has found that voluntary medium-term contracts can be used as a tool for landowner engagement, resulting in approximately 20% of medium-term agreements subsequently being converted to perpetual easements.

Including all securement, restorations, and Hen House maintenance, 6,240 acres of waterfowl habitat will be protected and/or enhanced under this proposal, contributing to waterfowl production within the Mississippi Flyway. These activities align with and contribute to the objectives of both the PHJV Implementation Plan and the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.

BUDGET

REVENUES

Table 1. Project revenues and funding status for FY18.

Source	Amount	Status
<i>Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources</i>	\$ 50,000.00	<i>Pending</i>
Arkansas Game and Fish Commission	\$ 40,000.00	Pending
Illinois Department of Natural Resources	\$ 75,000.00	Confirmed
Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency	\$ 40,000.00	Pending
Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation	\$ 315,500.00	Confirmed
North American Wetlands Conservation Act	\$ 377,300.00	Confirmed
Total	\$ 897,800.00	

Table 1. Project revenues and funding status for FY19.

Source	Amount	Status
<i>Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources</i>	\$ 50,000.00	<i>Pending</i>
Arkansas Game and Fish Commission	\$ 40,000.00	Pending
Illinois Department of Natural Resources	\$ 75,000.00	Pending
Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency	\$ 40,000.00	Pending
Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation	\$ 315,500.00	Confirmed
North American Wetlands Conservation Act	\$ 377,300.00	Confirmed
Total	\$ 897,800.00	

EXPENSES

Table 3. Project expenses by activity category.

Description	Wisconsin DNR Waterfowl Stamp Funds	Match Funds	Total
Contract Staff	\$ 19,000.00	\$ 531,000.00	\$ 551,000.00
Contracted Services	\$ 0.00	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 120,000.00
Landowner Payments	\$ 80,000.00	\$ 843,600.00	\$ 923,600.00
Travel	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 134,500.00	\$ 134,500.00
Overhead	\$ 0.00	\$ 66,500.00	\$ 66,500.00
Total	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 1,695,600.00	\$ 1,795,600.00

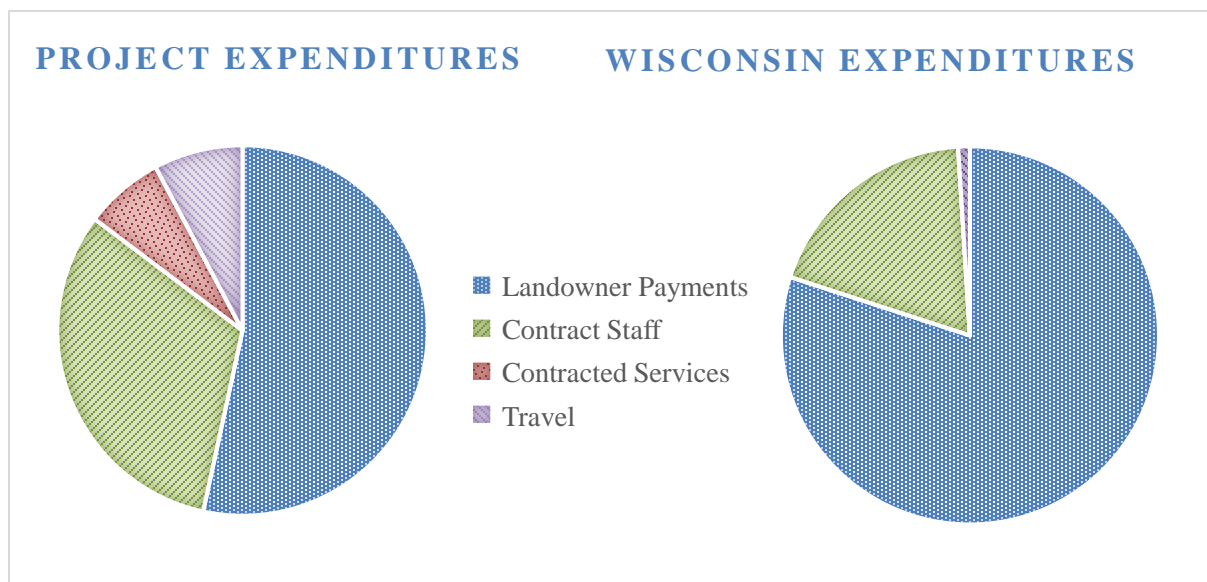


Figure 4. Expenditure of funds by activity category and source.

A CONSERVATION EASEMENT PARTNERSHIP

Having its roots in Manitoba, Delta Waterfowl has a long tradition of working to preserve and maintain waterfowl breeding opportunities in Manitoba. In order to maximize its impacts and minimize costs, Delta has worked with the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation (MHHC) to implement conservation easements, protecting waterfowl habitat, for the past 18 years.

MHHC is a Canadian leader in the delivery of conservation easements and habitat protection. As of the last national review, MHHC held the largest number of conservation easements in Canada and currently holds the largest easement, at 43,000 acres. Through this partnership, Delta and MHHC have protected 101,810 acres of wetland and associated upland habitat within the key waterfowl production areas of Manitoba (Figure 5 and Map 2). The protection of these habitats has led to \$12,725,932 (CAD) in cash and donation receipts being provided to private landowners of Manitoba. Of this total, \$1,101,391 (CAD) was sourced from various US State duck stamp funds.

By partnering with MHHC, Delta can ensure that the maximum amount of the state contribution goes towards landowner payments for the protection of habitat. Under the terms of the Delta-MHHC partnership, the Corporation uses its own funds and expertise to effectively and efficiently deliver the conservation easements, conduct annual compliance monitoring, and enforce easement restrictions. This partnership will allow \$80,000 of Wisconsin's funding (80% of the total) to be allocated to landowner payments, with the majority of administrative, management and ongoing monitoring costs being borne by other funders.

All conservation easements are registered on the land title, and remain in effect regardless of ownership. Prior to completion of any easement, MHHC obtains a postponement of mortgage so that in the event of a foreclosure, its conservation interest in the land will remain in place. This ensures continued protection for the habitat as well as the funder investment. Through the use of this tool, Delta and MHHC can maximize the amount of habitat protected and eliminate or reduce ongoing costs such as property taxes.

An investment in Delta's prairie wetland conservation efforts in Canada is a cost-effective and efficient way to enhance waterfowl populations in the Mississippi Flyway, and the State of Wisconsin.

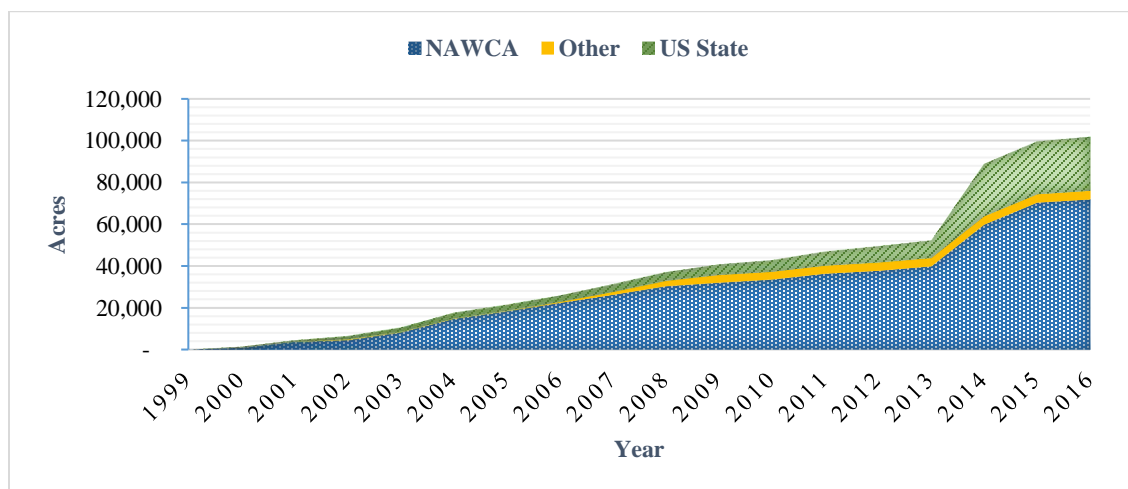


Figure 5. Cumulative conservation easement acquisition in Manitoba by Delta and MHHC since 1999.

OUR ORGANIZATION – DELTA WATERFOWL FOUNDATION

OUR MISSION

To produce ducks and secure the future of waterfowl hunting

OUR VISION

Abundant waterfowl and endless opportunities for hunters

OUR STRATEGIC HIGHLIGHTS

Delta Waterfowl Foundation is The Duck Hunters Organization, a leading conservation group working to produce ducks and secure the future of waterfowling in North America. Headquartered in Bismarck, North Dakota, and Winnipeg, Manitoba, Delta delivers on this mission for duck hunters in four key ways:

PRODUCE DUCKS: Delta's effective, science-based duck production programs, including Predator Management and Hen Houses, add thousands of ducks every year to your fall fight.

CONSERVE BREEDING DUCK HABITAT: Through tireless agriculture policy efforts and innovative, incentive-based habitat programs such as North Dakota Working Wetlands, and Adopt-A-Pothole, Delta ensures future duck production for you.

ENHANCE DUCK HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES: Utilizing a vast network of chapters and volunteers, Delta defends hunting rights and access anytime, anywhere they're threatened, on the local, state/provincial and federal levels.

PROTECT THE TRADITION OF DUCK HUNTING: Through First Hunt — the largest waterfowl-specific hunter recruitment program in the world — and our hunter retention research, Delta is introducing thousands of new duck hunters and ensuring current waterfowlers continue hunting.



OUR PARTNER – MANITOBA HABITAT HERITAGE CORPORATION

The Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation (MHHC) was created in 1986 with the purpose of engaging landowners in private-land conservation. Following the development of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP), the Corporation became the coordinating body for NAWMP in Manitoba and offices were established in strategic locations within Manitoba to promote and conduct waterfowl program delivery.

With the passing of conservation easement legislation in Manitoba (1998), MHHC shifted its focus to the perpetual protection of wildlife habitat. Since that time, MHHC has become one of the top three holders of conservation easements in Canada with 740 agreements affecting 173,892 acres of habitat. MHHC also owns 71 properties, totaling 14,590 acres of wildlife lands in Manitoba.

Delta and MHHC have had a long-standing partnership in program delivery within Manitoba. MHHC initially served as a delivery body for Delta's NAWCA applications but since 2007, MHHC has taken over the primary role of management and delivery of NAWCA grants, with Delta providing the US-sourced match funding, including that from states such as Wisconsin.

MHHC VISION

Habitats across Manitoba's lands and waters sustain biodiversity, healthy ecosystems, and community well-being

MHHC MISSION

To be a leader in delivering diverse habitat conservation programs through partnerships with the community and governments

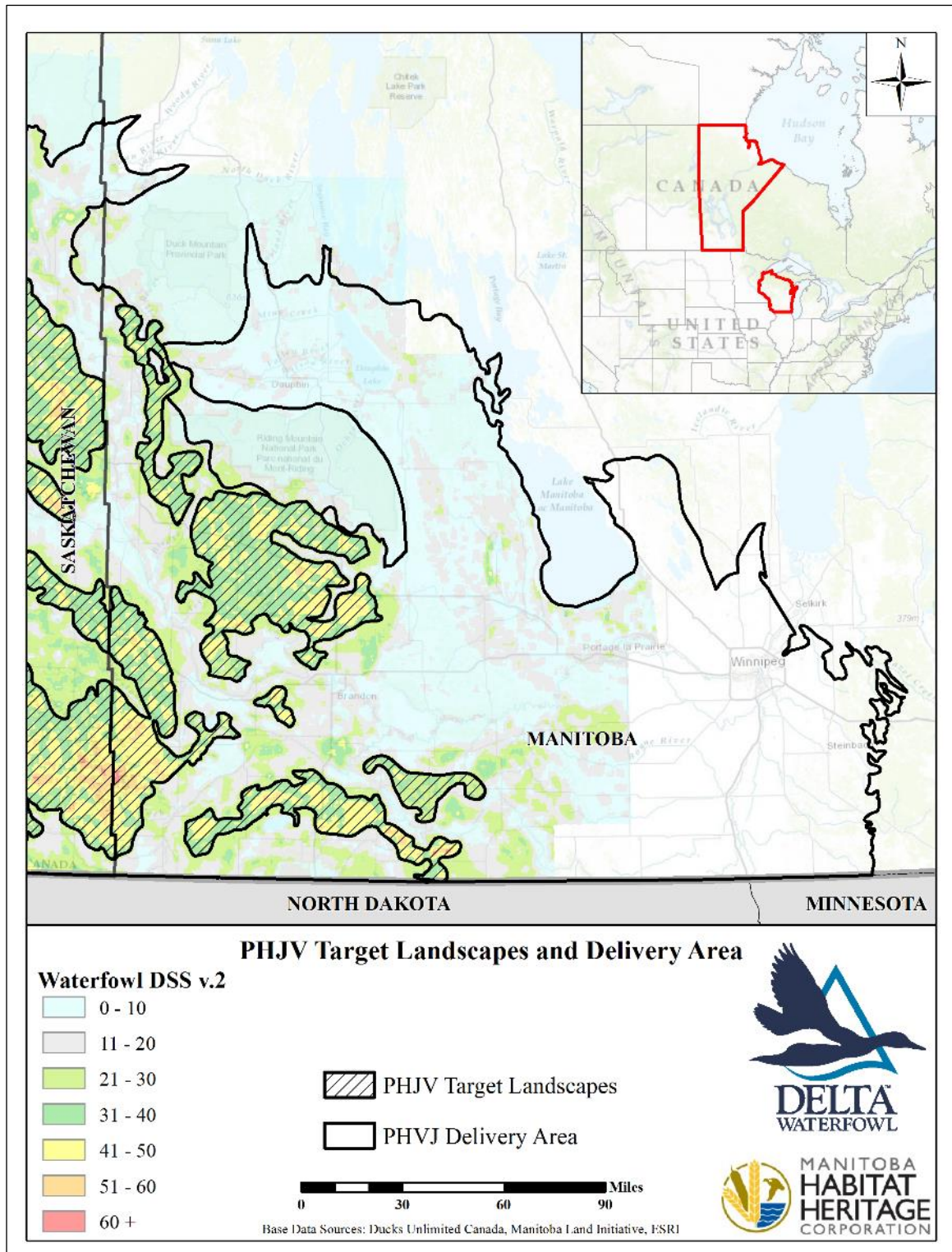
MHHC GOALS

1. To conserve, restore and enhance sufficient habitat to ensure healthy and diverse fish and wildlife populations
2. To ensure the collective impact of habitat conservation, restoration and enhancement supports sustainably at the ecosystem level
3. Habitat conservation, restoration and enhancement makes fundamental contributions to community social and economic well-being
4. The Corporation sustains its leadership position in habitat conservation, restoration and enhancement

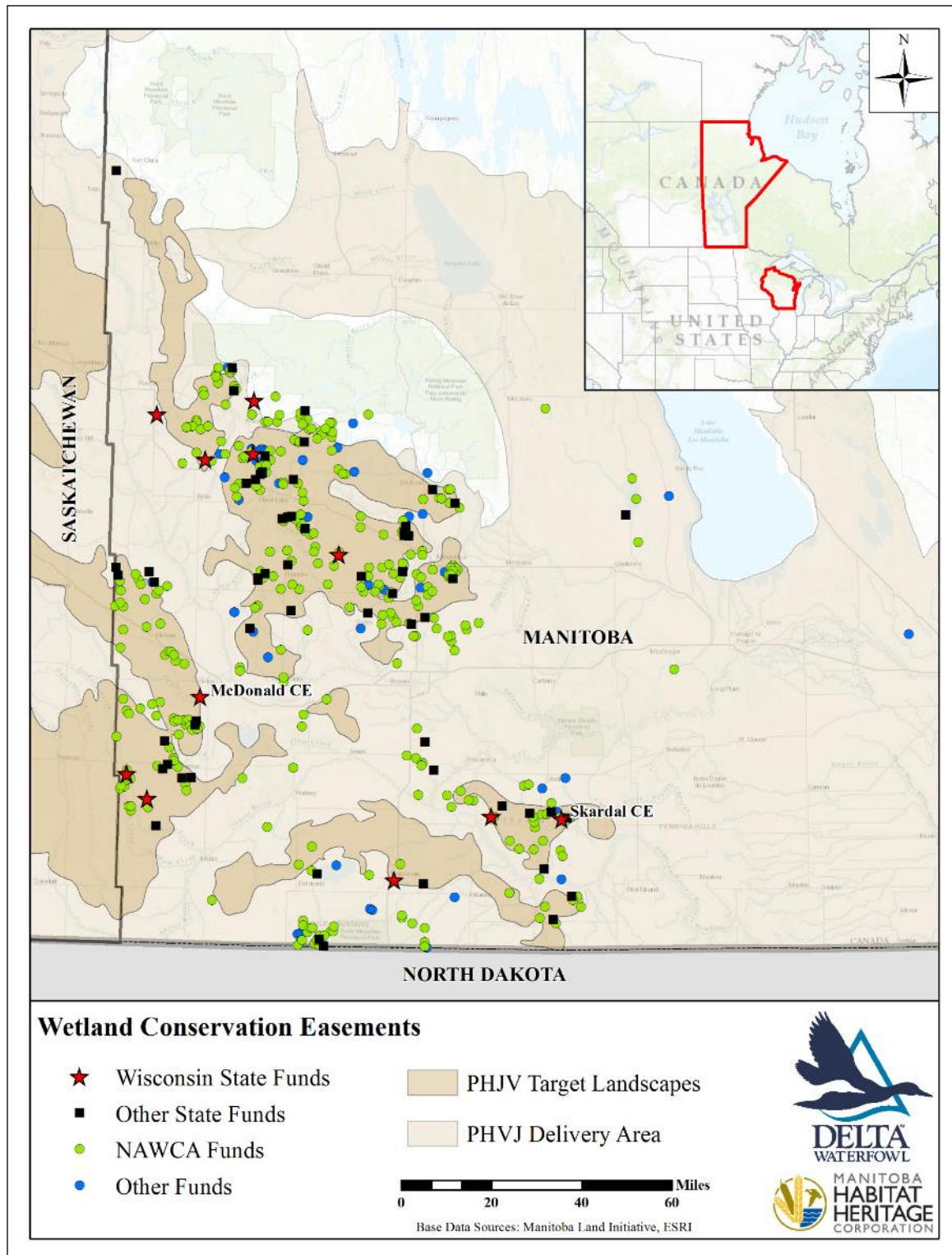


Homegrown conservation since 1986.

MAPS



Map 1. Project delivery area based on Prairie Habitat Joint Venture Target Landscapes.



Map 2. Wetland conservation easements in Manitoba described by funding source, including McDonald and Skardal conservation easements funded by the Wisconsin DNR.